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Project 2025: The Plan To Seize Power by Gutting America's System of Checks and Balances

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Restoring Social Trust in Democracy, Abortion Rights, Democracy, +7 More

Project 2025—and the budget plans it has spawned—would erode Americans' personal freedoms and harm the middle class, starting by consolidating power in the presidency just as authoritarian governments have done in other countries around the world.

The White House is seen with the U.S. flag at half-staff in Washington, D.C., on May 22, 2020. (Getty/Alex Wong)

This article is part of a series from the Center for American Progress exposing how the sweeping Project 2025 policy agenda would harm all Americans. This new authoritarian playbook, published by the Heritage Foundation, would destroy the 250-year-old system of checks and balances upon which U.S. democracy has relied and give far-right politicians, judges, and corporations more control over Americans' lives.

The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 is a road map for how a new far-right presidential administration can take over the country. The project contains four components: a 920-page book with far-right policy proposals, a personnel database of loyalists ready to replace tens of thousands of civil servants, a private online training center, and an unpublished plan for the first 180 days of a new administration.

Many of the proposals in Project 2025 are sweeping and would eliminate fundamental personal freedoms while cutting the take-home pay of millions of Americans. Unsurprisingly, Project 2025's policies to increase taxes on the middle class, allow corporations to stop paying workers overtime, implement a national abortion ban, and raise the retirement age for Social Security are wildly unpopular.

That is why the most striking aspect of Project 2025 is a new strategy to gut the system of checks and balances that has long protected Americans' personal freedoms. This strategy would concentrate power in the hands of the president —and set in motion a plan to flood the civil service with far-right loyalists to seize control of independent agencies. It is a playbook written for an authoritarian administration. This new vision would make it even harder for the American people to have a say in their government or oppose policies they disagree with.

The scope of Project 2025 is extensive. An ongoing series from the Center for American Progress unpacks specific proposals in Project 2025, from raising the cost of prescription drugs and restricting access to contraception, to slashing funding for early childhood and K-12 education. There are proposals to end civil rights protections, exploit the most vulnerable Americans, stop safeguards that protect clean drinking water, halt action to combat the climate crisis, and open the door to an unprecedented level of corruption at the expense of the public. Taken together, Project 2025 is a plan for a presidency focused on consolidating and holding on to power.

Many of the policies listed in the public 920-page agenda can be grouped into three core areas:

1. Gut the U.S. system of checks and balances to consolidate power.
2. Take away Americans' fundamental personal freedoms.
3. Raise costs on the middle class to give the wealthy billions.

Gut the U.S. system of checks and balances to consolidate power

Project 2025 would consolidate power in the presidency by weakening the independence of public agencies, preparing to replace tens of thousands of civil servants with far-right loyalists, and gutting the system of checks and balances.

Project 2025 would give the president power to use all the resource of the federal government to investigate and prosecute whoever he or she wants.

First, Project 2025 calls for reclassifying tens of thousands of civil servants as political appointees, seeking to strip them of civil service labor protections and enabling a president to replace them with political loyalists. Experts whom Americans rely on to stay out of politics and serve the public, such as engineers and scientists, could lose their jobs. The same goes for attorneys whose jobs it is to ensure politicians and bureaucrats do not break the law or violate Americans' rights. Project 2025 includes a database to help the president replace these independent civil servants with people who have pledged their loyalty to one political ideology instead of to the American people as a whole.

Second, Project 2025 would end the independence of the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice, weakening the rule of law. Today, the FBI investigates and exposes white collar crime and corruption across the country without political interference, which means law enforcement can hold politicians and the wealthy accountable when they break the law. Under Project 2025, people with enough money or political influence could be placed above the law at the whim of a president. Even worse, Project 2025 would give the president the power to use all the resources of the federal government to investigate and prosecute whoever he or she wants—including political opponents. The extremist right-wing MAGA-controlled Supreme Court's recent decision in *Trump v. United States* would allow this radical departure from American values, granting presidents sweeping immunity for official acts and allowing the president to direct decisions around all federal investigations and prosecutions.

Project 2025 would not stop with politicizing law enforcement. The plan eliminates the independence of agencies that protect consumers and ensure businesses can compete fairly in the economy, such as the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. It even proposes using the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a surveillance network to monitor abortions nationwide in order to restrict reproductive freedom in states where abortion is currently legal.

Key points

- Fire tens of thousands of civil servants.
- End the independence of the FBI and the Department of Justice.
- Consolidate power in the presidency by gutting checks and balances.

Take away Americans' fundamental personal freedoms

Project 2025 seeks to create a society where personal freedoms are subordinate to the interests of a select few.

Project 2025's far-reaching agenda would strip away fundamental rights, affecting everything from reproductive freedoms to civil liberties. The plan would take away freedoms that Americans rely on by implementing nationwide bans on abortion and contraception, curtailing LGBTQ rights, and increasing corporate control over workers. It would redefine personal autonomy and freedom in America. Most alarming, the Project 2025 agenda blatantly disregards individual freedoms in favor of political and ideological control.

By restricting access to essential health care, permitting discrimination, and manipulating what students are taught, Project 2025 seeks to create a society where personal freedoms are subordinate to the interests of a select few.

Four ways Project 2025 would take away Americans' personal freedoms

- Ban abortion nationwide, including a ban on in vitro fertilization, restricting access to contraception, and criminalizing medication abortion the most common form of abortion care in the United States.
- Eliminate civil rights protections for millions of Americans, making it easier to discriminate against LGBTQ people, women, and people of color.
- Give employers even more control over their workers to hold down wages, prevent Americans from forming unions, exploit child labor, and lock people into lower-paying jobs.
- Control what local schools can teach and ban books from the classroom.

Raise costs on the middle class to give billions to the wealthy

Project 2025 and the legislation and budgets it has inspired would directly raise costs on the middle class to give the wealthy and corporations billions in tax cuts. One proposal would let companies stop paying overtime; another would cut Social Security benefits by raising the retirement age.

These proposals would increase the cost of buying a home, add a new tax on health insurance, raise prescription drug prices, raise taxes on working families,

and increase the costs of everyday goods.

The top 10 ways Project 2025 and its MAGA extremist allies harm the middle class

Allow employers to stop paying workers for overtime work.

Cut Social Security benefits for the majority of American workers by raising the retirement age.

Put a new tax on health insurance for millions of people covered through their employer.

Increase taxes for the middle class and working families.

Ban Medicare from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices.

Eliminate the Head Start program, closing preschools across the country and stripping comprehensive services for low-income families.

Weaken protections for Americans with preexisting health conditions and forcing patients to pay more for preventive health services such as vaccines and birth control.

Make it more expensive to buy a home by increasing mortgage insurance premiums on Federal Housing Administration loans.

Eliminate the U.S. Department of Education and end more affordable student loan repayment plans.

Cut corporate taxes by $500 billion, from 21 percent to 18 percent—the lowest in more than 80 years—and cut taxes for the wealthy.

Conclusion

Could all this really happen? Is America so fragile that a small group could overthrow settled law and restrict the freedoms of millions?

Unfortunately, yes. Only two years ago, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* by the U.S. Supreme Court illustrated how the far right can abuse the judicial system, overturn long-established precedents upon which Americans rely, and strip away fundamental freedoms from millions of Americans.

The current Supreme Court has not stopped. This year, the court ruled that the president has full immunity for so-called official acts, overturning the bedrock principle of American democracy that no person is above the law. It discarded decades of settled law to give corporations and special interests more power over the economy on the backs of the middle class. The history of authoritarian movements around the world shows democracies can be broken—and that the people behind Project 2025 are in the process of breaking this one.

The Declaration of Independence illustrates the challenge before the country. While all Americans are born with unalienable rights, their freedoms are not simply ordained. Ultimately, citizens are responsible for securing democracy and protecting their freedoms—no one else.

There is no emergency brake if people in power want to disregard the system of checks and balances and do as they wish. That is the true threat—and true weakness—of Project 2025. At its heart, it is the playbook of a dictator.

Americans do not support authoritarianism, and that is why they will defeat the corrupt agenda laid out in Project 2025 when it is exposed.

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